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All persons are by nature free and independent, and have certain natural and unalienable rights, among which are those of enjoying and defending life and liberty, of acquiring, possessing, and protecting property, and of pursuing and obtaining safety and happiness.

-- Article 1, Section 1, New Jersey State Constitution

A Mindset Shift Is Necessary to Defeat Gun Violence

By Tamar Manasseh

One night in 2013, I sat in my living room, gaze fixed on the television. A teenage girl the same age as my own daughter had been murdered. In our neighborhood (and the neighborhood of the then-president, too).

Her mother sobbed and moaned uncontrollably on the TV. She was the mother of Black children the same age as my own. She probably would've called herself a good mom. Just like me.

At that moment my sole mission in life became saving my children. I had a theory: If enough adults, mainly moms, sat outside in lawn chairs and eye-catching shirts, violence would cease. I knew how much my own teenagers hated to be watched and how different their behavior was when they were, so I figured all teenagers would pretty much react the same way to supervision.

So, I started Mothers Against Senseless Killings. Every evening, we set up our lawn chairs and a barbecue grill on the block where that shooting took place -- a block that had also seen high levels of gun violence in the past. We fed not only the bodies of the people in the community, but also their souls.

First, I had to see the teenagers in this new neighborhood as children, just as I saw my own -- not thugs, gangbangers or anything else of the sort. That wasn't part of the formula. They had to be treated with love, the same way my children were, or else it may not work.

Yes, some of the teenagers had guns. They also had hearts and minds. The guns didn't make the

humans. Their hearts did. So that's the part of them I communicated with. They all knew guns were bad, wrong and sometimes even shameful, but they couldn't give them up, because with limited resources, limited education, limited opportunities and an overabundant, disproportionate felony record, how else do you protect yourself while you're on the streets, surviving anyway you can?

I never asked for their guns, yet I was always certain they were present. The police were also always present, as were other prying eyes, who waited -- nay, hoped -- that someone would get shot, so that this newfound peace in this corner of Englewood would prove to be as farcical as they'd thought it was.

I started MASK three summers ago. Three years -- and 15,000 meals, thousands of backpack giveaways, hundreds of pep talks, millions of hugs, a few bee stings, some sunburns and countless new relationships -- we have not had a shooting on the block. Not one.

Yet, no one, not a soul, has turned in one of those guns that I am always sure are present. The lesson I learned was in order to save my own children, I had to try to save them all.

The answer wasn't to take the guns -- although there are way too many and they do make parenting exponentially harder. It was to change the minds.

Unfortunately, the horrific episode we saw in Las Vegas this past weekend [where a sniper killed 58 people] is nothing new to us in MASK. We were just as horrified by the shootings in Columbine, Sandy Hook and Aurora. Our thoughts and prayers no longer suffice. Action and involvement must take its place. Just

as Congress or the Chicago Police Department didn't make the changes that we've seen over the past three years in this neighborhood, it is up to the people to make these changes everywhere.

We can't rely on gun manufacturers to stop making guns, pro-gun lobbies to stop advocating for more relaxed gun laws, gun dealers to stop their trade, or Congress to enact gun laws that prevent these horrible events without disproportionately penalizing people of color in the process.

We must get our lawn chairs out, each of us, and take to our corners, our front porches and anywhere where the presence of community can save lives. We must dedicate ourselves to seeing things, knowing things, watching each other, watching out for each other and spotting minor issues before they turn into major tragedies.

-- Truthout Op-Ed October 4, 2017

2nd Amendment advocates cheer 'concealed carry' decision

By Bob Unruh

On Friday the U.S. District Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia upheld the decision that the Constitution does not give authority to officials to decide whether a gun owner has a "good" reason to obtain a concealed-carry permit.

The earlier decision from a three-judge panel in *Wrenn v. District of Columbia* favored Brian Wrenn and the Second Amendment Foundation, who had challenged the district's practice of demanding that citizens provide a "good reason" to be issued a concealed-carry permit.

"Ten years ago, Washington, D.C.'s political leadership tried to extinguish Second Amendment rights before the Supreme Court," said Alan Gura, the famous attorney who has fought many gun-rights battles in court.

"The result was *D.C. v. Heller*, a tremendous victory for the rights of all Americans. With the court of appeals again confirming the people's right to bear arms, Washington, D.C.'s politicians must once again ask themselves whether it makes sense to keep resisting our fundamental rights."

He was the lawyer to win at the Supreme Court in both the 2008 *District of Columbia v. Heller* case and in 2010 in the *McDonald v. City of Chicago*.

"*Heller* affirmed that the amendment protects an individual right to keep and bear arms, and *McDonald* incorporated the Second Amendment to the states via the 14th Amendment," SAF explained.

The district imposed the "good reason" rule following its earlier gun-control losses in court. The D.C. government had petitioned for the full court to hear the current case, but the judges refused to reconsider the 2-1 decision that came earlier this year.

The Washington Times said the outcome "sets up the potential for the Supreme Court to take up the case as the decision creates a split with four other federal circuits that have found discretionary permitting schemes elsewhere are legal."

Adam Winkler, a law professor in Los Angeles, told the newspaper, "Because of what the D.C. Circuit didn't do today, the Supreme Court is now far more likely to take a concealed-carry case."

The result could be a nationwide precedent for access to concealed-carry permits.

WND reported last month the now-banned rule had allowed Police Chief Cathy Lanier to deny 99 percent of all carry applications.

Officials in Washington also had claimed their city was "unique" because of its dense population, which includes "thousands of high-ranking federal officials and international diplomats."

The majority opinion in the July ruling was written by Judge Thomas Beall Griffith, who declared:

"At the Second Amendment's core lies the right of responsible citizens to carry firearms for personal self-defense beyond the home, subject to longstanding restrictions. ... The District's good-reason law is necessarily a total ban on exercises of

that constitutional right for most D.C. residents. That's enough to sink this law under (the 2008 U.S. Supreme Court's *Heller* ruling)."

Larry Pratt, executive director of Gun Owners of America, told WND in July that the D.C. law was a de facto gun ban that affected all law-abiding people who visit the nation's capital.

"Overturning the de facto D.C. gun ban on constitutional grounds is very welcome. Not only does it respect the Constitution, it will result in fewer crimes of violence in the district," he said. -- www.wnd.com September 29, 2017

Here's How Much Money the NFL Rakes in from Taxpayers

By Jarrett Stepman

The National Football League is now plunged into politics as players throughout the sport kneel for the national anthem.

This fiasco may, however, open the eyes of the public to a serious and generally unchecked issue: billionaire NFL owners sponging enormous amounts of money from taxpayers through crony capitalist schemes.

The fact is that a business that raked in \$14 billion in revenue in 2016 is heavily subsidized by local, state, and federal money based on dubious claims about stimulating the economy.

One report on Watchdog.org said that over the past two decades, the NFL has raked in about \$7 billion of taxpayer money to spend on stadium renovation and building.

Another study from the Brookings Institution showed that federal taxpayers have subsidized the construction of 36 stadiums at a cost of over \$3.2 billion since 2000.

"Tax-exempt municipal bonds are typically reserved for public-use projects such as bridges, water systems, and other infrastructure," Michael Sargent, an infrastructure expert at The Heritage Foundation, Sargent wrote for The Daily Signal. "Yet because of a loophole in the tax code, private-use stadiums can take advantage of this tax break, and have done so prolifically."

Research from George Mason University has shown that not only do communities gain almost no economic benefits from subsidized sports teams, but some findings "indicate harmful effects of sports on per capita income, wage and salary disbursements, and wages per job."

Given the massive discontent over national anthem kneeling and

rampant politicization of the once unifying sport of football, perhaps now Americans will turn a more skeptical eye toward how their sports teams rely on public money and actually do something about it.

"In America, if you want to play sports, you're free to do so. If you want to protest, you're free to do so," Rep. Matt Gaetz, R-Fla., said, according to The Washington Post. "But you should do so on your own time and on your own dime."

Recent legislation on Capitol Hill aimed to strip federal funding from sports teams. A bill sponsored by Sens. James Lankford, R-Okla., and Cory Booker, D-N.J., would prevent teams from using municipal bonds that are exempt from federal taxes.

Rep. Steve Russell, R-Okla., introduced a similar bill in the House.

On Tuesday, Gaetz became the lead sponsor of legislation that would end the tax-exempt status of professional sports leagues.

NFL and other sports teams have a deep financial interest in getting taxpayers to pay their bills, so it will take a widespread concerted effort on the part of the public to end this gravy train.

Since NFL billionaire owners have gone out of their way to accommodate millionaire players in standing down for the national anthem, perhaps taxpaying Americans should start withholding money from the privileged and let them all stand on their own two feet. --

<http://dailysignal.com/2017/09/26>

JPFO Calls for Statue Destruction

In the midst of the national frenzy for removing offensive symbols, many with controversial but historical significance, a Jewish civil-rights group is calling for destruction of the United Nations anti Second-Amendment-rights statue – a Bill of Rights and civil rights affront - [a six-shot revolver with a twisted barrel] outside U.N. headquarters the heart of New York City. President Trump just visited the U.N. to emphasize the importance of sovereignty—our national rights.

In its official statement, Jews for the Preservation of Firearms Ownership, said: "This grotesque assault on the most fundamental tenet of the U.S. Bill of Rights, plus the basic civil and human right of Americans *and all people* to protect themselves from harm—and the kind of evil that lurks in the U.N. headquarters itself. The statue must be seen for what it is, and

expunged. **It's not art, it's a finger in freedom's eye."**

"JPFO supports non-violence but that's not what this is. The pretzel gun denigrates every legitimate role firearms play in preserving peace, freedom, prosperity, deterring enemies, stopping crime and the jihad, providing food even at subsistence levels for the poor—in short, it is a statist abomination," according to Alan Korwin, an author and consultant to JPFO. "It conveys little notion or implication of disarming the horrific denizens of the U.N. and tyrants who rule much of Earth's population," he says. "Such a misguided affront to our heritage, history and constitutional guarantees springs from ignorance. It has no place on our soil." JPFO suggests moving it to a Human Rights Council nation like Iraq, Myanmar or Saudi Arabia, or perhaps communist China or Africa is appropriate, anywhere but the land of the free and the home of the brave, where real guns keep the violent at bay.

Rather than moving the [statue], melt it down for ammunition, as penance for the long-standing humiliating constitutional insult.

-- Press release September 22, 2017
<http://www.jpfo.org>

Fatwa: Hunted in America

Hardcover – November 1, 2017

By Pamela Geller (Author)

Her critics have called her 'the most dangerous woman in America,' 'far-right hate queen,' and 'the anti-Muslim movement's most visible and flamboyant figurehead.'

Her admirers say she is 'the Joan of Arc of the counter-jihad movement,' 'one of the top world experts in radical Islam, sharia, and Islamic supremacism,' and 'a wonderful fighter for liberty.'

Now, in *Fatwa: Hunted in America*, Pamela Geller tells how she became one of the world's foremost activists for the freedom of speech, individual rights, and equality of rights for all.

With the slicing wit and piercing insight that have characterized all her work, Geller recounts her unlikely journey from New York City career girl to indomitably fearless human rights activist, reviled by the enemies of freedom the world over. 'I assumed my freedom,' she writes. 'Never for one moment did I think that it could be taken from me. But all that changed on one day.'

That day was September 11, 2001, when the global jihad struck

in America with terrifying and murderous force. The United States of America and the free world would never be the same again.

Neither would Geller. In this book, she tells the whole extraordinary story of how she began chronicling her take on news events at her groundbreaking website Atlas Shrugs, then moved into activism, at first on behalf of Muslim girls who were being brutalized and victimized at home for not following the misogynistic rules of Islamic law, and then to stand against the advance of jihad and sharia on numerous fronts -- above all for the freedom of speech.

It's all here: Geller recounts the battle to defeat the sinister Ground Zero mosque project; the ISIS attack at Geller's Mohammed Art Exhibit and Cartoon Contest in Garland, Texas; the fatwa issued to her and plot to behead her; and much more including the relentless vilification from a mainstream media hell-bent on defaming and destroying everyone who stands for freedom against jihad terror and sharia oppression.

Pamela Geller writes: 'Any lover of freedom would have been tarred the same way I was, and many have been. I am but a proxy in this terrible, long war. What has happened to me is what happens, in small and large ways, to every American who stands for freedom.'

Yet, as shown in this book, Pamela Geller has prevailed. Without her there would be a 16-story mega-mosque at Ground Zero today. Without her untold numbers of young women who are living free today instead would have been victims of honor killings. Without her countless numbers of indefatigable fighters for freedom would have been cowed and intimidated into silence by an increasingly violent and authoritarian left-wing agenda.

If this book is proof of anything, it's that one person can make a difference. And what a remarkable difference Pamela Geller has made. At last, in *Fatwa: Hunted In America*, she tells her story. -- Amazon.com book blurb

Man convicted in plot to behead blogger over cartoon contest

By Alanna Durkin Richer
BOSTON (AP) — A man who fell under the influence of the Islamic State group was convicted Wednesday of plotting to behead a conservative American blogger for organizing a Prophet Muhammad cartoon contest.

Jurors found David Wright guilty of all charges, including conspiracy to provide material support to a designated foreign terrorist organization and conspiracy to commit acts of terrorism transcending national boundaries.

The 28-year-old from Everett, Massachusetts, faces up to life in prison.

Prosecutors said Wright, his uncle and a third man conspired to kill blogger Pamela Geller because they were upset she organized Prophet Muhammad cartoon contest in Texas in 2015. During the contest, two other men opened fire outside and wounded a security guard before they were killed in a shootout with law enforcement.

Wright's uncle, Ussamah Rahim, told Wright on a recorded phone call that he couldn't wait to attack Geller and decided instead to go after "those boys in blue," referring to police. Wright told his uncle that was "beautiful" and encouraged him to delete all the data from his computer before carrying out his attack.

Hours later, Rahim was shot and killed by authorities after he lunged at them with a knife when they approached him in Boston. The attack on Geller was never carried out.

Wright's uncle received directions about the plan to kill Geller from Junaid Hussain, an Islamic State group member and hacker who was later killed in an airstrike in Syria, prosecutors said.

The third man accused in the plot, Nicholas Rovinski, of Warwick, RI, testified against Wright after pleading guilty to conspiracy charges. Rovinski faces 15 to 22 years in prison.

-- AP October 18, 2017

Why Americans won't give up their guns

By Gary Younge, editor-at-large for the Guardian

This year the country's main gun lobby, the National Rifle Association, held its convention with the slogan "Stand and Fight". In a speech in equal measure demagogic and apocalyptic, the CEO, Wayne LaPierre, evoked a nation in peril and demise. "There are terrorists and home invaders and drug cartels and carjackers and knockout gamers and rapers, haters, campus killers, airport killers ... I ask you: do you trust the government to protect you? We are on our own"

The enduring question of why America continues to maintain such lax gun laws [in the face of

Sunday's horrific incident in Las Vegas] when such atrocities are so commonplace can in no small part be answered by LaPierre's dystopian response. Fear and LaPierre's fearmongering are intimately connected to some of the country's most cherished myths and pervasive pathologies. When the national narrative is a story of conquering, dominating, force and power, an atavistic attachment to the gun can have more pull than a rational case against it. These claims for the gun are of course nonsense. Most people who are killed by guns kill themselves. People who have a gun in the house are far more likely to be shot dead than those who don't. If more guns really made you safer, America would be one of the safest places in the world. As it is seven children or teenagers are shot dead on average every day. Once a week a toddler injures someone with a gun.

Yet while the NRA should not be underestimated, its role should not be exaggerated either. Even as it wins (or blocks) votes in Congress a consistent majority of Americans polled this year believe gun laws should be more strict, that it's too easy to buy a gun and that if more people carried guns America would be less safe. When it comes to supporting background checks for all gun buyers there is near-unanimity (94%). The NRA has far more power in the polity than influence outside it.

But it has been able to tap into many of the core themes of the broader American narrative in a way that gun-control advocates have not. There is nothing inevitable about this. When a gunman shot children in Dunblane in 1996 Britain tightened its gun laws; when a shooter ran amok in Port Arthur that same year Australia did the same. That's what mature and responsive democracies do. But in America, appeals to freedom, masculinity, small government and individualism, even when they are flawed, have more purchase than arguments for background checks and weapons bans, even when those arguments are right.

The gun is invoked as a cornerstone of America's founding story and a safeguard against tyranny. "It's about independence and freedom," David Britt, a gun owner, explained to me at the NRA convention in 2012. "When you have a democratic system and an honourable people then you trust your citizens ... In Europe they cede their rights and freedoms to their

governments. But we think government should be subservient to us."

These myths are, of course, partial. In a nation that became possible through genocide and slavery, among other things, the gun was central to a particular notion of racial power. If gun enthusiasts were seriously concerned about state tyranny they would have been marching alongside Black Lives Matter demonstrators protesting police shootings and calling for the mass armament of poor, black neighbourhoods. That's not the kind of tyranny they object to.

But the myths are also powerful. What the gun lobby lacks in breadth of support it makes up for in depth of commitment. Gun-control advocates, for the most part, want to change laws. Gun-rights advocates, by and large, believe they are preserving "essential truths" that make the country what it is. They have proved themselves more motivated because long after those distressing scenes from Vegas are a distant memory, these myths will remain vivid.

Americans need new gun laws. But in order to get them they will have to start telling themselves a new story about the country it is, has been and wants to be. Their lives depend on it. — theguardian.com 6 October 2017

No budging on gun control

By Meredith Dake-O'Connor

I view the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence as declaring the intrinsic and inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. And I believe the framers knew that liberty is only achieved when the citizenry is known to keep tyrannical government, and those who would do me harm, at bay. My favorite explainer on citizens and their relation with tyrannical government is James Otis' "Rights of the British Colonies" essay, but many like to use Hamilton's Federalist Paper No. 29.

Beyond that, part of having liberty is personal safety from harm. Outside of the grace of God, I am the one primarily responsible for my safety, Further, because I am able to be responsible for my safety, I have a duty as a good citizen to be prepared to protect others who cannot protect themselves. This is part of liberty. And the primary way I can ensure my liberty is by owning a firearm....

Second Amendment advocates truly view owning a firearm as an intrinsic right and a must to preserve liberty. It has nothing to do

with hunting. It has nothing to do with hobbies.... Further, it's the primary reason we seem unwilling to budge on this policy when tragedies occur. Evil acts don't cancel out a law-abiding citizen's rights.

-- <http://thefederalist.com/2017/10/06>

16 Questions about the Las Vegas Shooting

By Michael Snyder

The following are 16 unanswered questions about the Las Vegas shooting that the mainstream media does not want to talk about...

#4 As Jon Rappoport has pointed out, it would have been impossible for Stephen Paddock to kill and wound 573 people in less than five minutes of shooting with the kinds of weapons that he is alleged to have used. So why won't law enforcement authorities acknowledge this fact?

#6 How did someone with "no military background" and that wasn't a "gun guy at all" operate such advanced weapons? Because what we are being told by the mainstream media just doesn't make any sense whatsoever. I really like how Natural News made this point...

"Far from what the firearms-illiterate media claims, these are not systems that any Joe off the street can just pick up and use to effortlessly mow down 500 people. Running these systems requires extensive training, experience and stamina. It is physically impossible for a guy like Stephen Paddock to operate such a system in the sustained, effective manner that we witnessed, especially when shooting from an elevated position which throws off all the ranging of the weapon system.

"Far from being a Navy Seal, Stephen Paddock is a retired accountant senior citizen with a gambling problem and a flabby physique.... I'm calling this "Mission IMPOSSIBLE" because of the physical impossibility of a retired, untrained senior citizen pulling this off."

#11 Was Paddock on antidepressants like so many other mass killers in the past have been?

-- Kakistocracy October 5, 2017

After Las Vegas, gun-control group seizing moment to push for tighter regulations

By Sari Horwitz

One of the country's leading gun-control groups changed its name Tuesday from Americans for Responsible Solutions to Giffords, the name of the former Arizona congresswoman who was shot in the

head in 2011 and founded the group two years later after 20 Connecticut first-graders were killed.

The name change is part of a larger effort to reframe the gun debate in the wake of the recent mass shooting in Las Vegas. By focusing on former Democratic congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords as a symbol of "courage," they are hoping to draw in more people to fight for stronger firearms laws.

Giffords and her husband Mark Kelly, both gun owners, released a video Tuesday that they made with former president Barack Obama, Sen. Patrick J. Toomey (R-Pa.) and retired Gen. Stanley McChrystal, who commanded the Joint Special Operations Command for five years.

"People say we can never take the guns out of society completely," McChrystal says on the video. "Well, I don't think many people are calling for that. I think what we're calling for is the kinds of things that bring sanity back."

Four days after the Las Vegas shooting, the National Rifle Association unexpectedly joined the effort, releasing a statement saying, "The NRA believes that devices designed to allow semiautomatic rifles to function like fully automatic rifles should be subject to additional regulations."

The NRA declined to comment on the rebranding of the Giffords group.

-- Washington Post October 17, 2017

Commentary: Americans for Responsible Solutions" becoming "Giffords." I wonder if that's where Sarah Brady screwed up. Her group went through these permutations: National Coalition to Ban Handguns -> National Council to Control Handguns -> Handgun Control, Inc. -> Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence -> Brady Campaign. I think Sarah stopped too soon. The last iteration would have been the winner: "Bradys."

The true secret of the NRA's success

By Jonah Goldberg

In the wake of the horror in Las Vegas this week, countless politicians, journalists and commentators are insisting that the National Rifle Association has a "stranglehold" on the Republican Party.

The Washington Post and New York Times laid out splashy reports chronicling how much money the NRA has given to Republican congressmen. "Since 1998, the National Rifle Association has donated

\$3,533,294 to current members of Congress," the Post reported in 2016.

The op-ed pages have been suffused with claims that the NRA has bought Republicans with blood money, stifling the popular will and thwarting democracy in the process.

There's just one problem: It's not true.

Oh, the NRA has given a good amount of money to Republicans (and quite a few Democrats) over the years. But in the grubby bazaar of politician-buying, the NRA is a bit player.

Consider that \$3.5 million in donations over nearly 20 years the Washington Post made such a fuss about. According to Opensecrets.org, the legal profession contributed \$207 million to politicians in 2016 alone. Billionaire anti-global-warming activist Ton Steyer gave \$90 million (all to Democrats) in 2016.

In terms of lobbying and political contributions, the NRA and the gun industry generally spend next to nothing compared with the big players.

According to OpenSecrets, the NRA spent \$1.1 million on contributions in 2016 and \$3 million on lobbying. The food and beverage industry has spent \$14 million on lobbying in 2017 alone. Alphabet, Google's parent company, spent \$9 million on contributions in 2016.

In fairness, NRA-related outside PACs do bundle a good deal more cash, but it's still a fraction of what big labor and the trial lawyers pony up. All NRA-related outside expenditures in 2016 added up to about \$54 million. A single liberal super PAC, Priorities USA, spent \$133 million.

Some people, even when they know these numbers, still can't let go of the idea that opposition to gun control is bought and paid for.

Part of the problem, I think, is that people who hate guns and gun rights cannot believe that people disagree with them in good faith. There must be evil motives, chiefly greed, that explain everything.

The NRA doesn't need to spend a lot of money convincing politicians to protect gun rights. All it needs to do is spend a little money clarifying that a great many of those politicians' constituents care deeply about gun rights.

Maybe some politicians secretly favor stricter controls on guns. But what keeps them from pursuing such restrictions isn't cash from the NRA; it's votes from their passionate constituents.

In other words, don't follow the money, follow the votes.

-- nypost.com/2017/10/05

The Cost to US Taxpayers for Accepting Immigrants Is \$135 Billion per Year

A study from the Federation for American Immigration Reform found that 11-million illegal immigrants cost taxpayers \$135 billion per year for free medical care, education, and law-enforcement. While illegal alien workers do pay an estimated \$19-billion per year in taxes, there is a deficit of \$116 billion.

The Center for Immigration Studies says that chain immigration, which allows relatives of migrants to come to the US, has resulted in one migrant bringing in an average of 3.45 more people with him into the US. Mexican immigrants average more than 6 additional family members brought into the US. 24% are over 50 and become eligible for Social Security benefits. If DACA immigrants are granted amnesty, they are expected to bring in millions more people to the US.

Simon Rosenberg of the New Democratic Network tries to justify mass immigration by claiming that illegal immigrants, who make up 5% of the US workforce, add to the GDP by hundreds of billions of dollars. Tucker argues that GDP is not the same as wealth because there is no consideration for the cost.

Rosenberg agreed that when the US allows one million low wage workers to immigrate into the US per year, they lower the wages in America....

The Left supports immigration because 80% of the immigrants vote Democrat. -- Need to Know News from G. Edward Griffin, based on a Fox News report September 30, 2017

Rand Paul: Unconstitutional Saudi War in Yemen Is Not in Our Interest and Congress Should Vote

By Robert Naiman

Last week, on the Senate floor, Sen. Rand Paul (R-KY) affirmed that US participation in Saudi Arabia's Yemen war has never been authorized by Congress -- in violation of the Constitution and the War Powers Resolution -- and demanded that Congress vote on it.

Senator Paul charged that US participation in the Saudi war in Yemen is not in the interests of Americans, but

is in fact harmful to the interests of Americans:

"Does anybody in America think that the war in Yemen is in our vital interest? Most people don't know where Yemen is, much [less] think it's in our vital interests. Guess what? The war in Yemen may actually be opposed to our vital national interest. It may be making it worse."

Senator Paul also charged that US support for Saudi Arabia's war has fueled the world's worst outbreak of cholera and help push 17 million people to the edge of starvation.

Senator Paul further argued that US support for Saudi Arabia's war in Yemen is helping Al Qaeda:

"Is it possible that in us supporting the Saudi Arabian-backed government against the Houthis, they fight and kill each other to such a degree of chaos that al Qaeda ... fills the vacuum? Well, if you look at Libya, that's what happened. If you look at Syria, that's what happened. What if it happens in Yemen?"

Unlike the Senate, the House of Representatives has not had a roll call vote regarding any aspect of US participation in Saudi Arabia's war on Yemen in at least a year, when an amendment introduced by Rep. John Conyers (D-MI) was narrowly defeated.

Paul said "he supports a bipartisan effort in the House by Reps. Justin Amash (R-MI) and Mark Pocan (D-WI) to force the Trump administration to seek congressional approval on United States involvement in Saudi Arabia's war with Yemen, which started under President Obama."

Senate Foreign Relations Chair Bob Corker (R-TN) has affirmed Paul's obvious point: The 2001 anti-al Qaeda Authorization for Use of Military Force doesn't authorize US military action against Yemen's Houthis.-- Truthout Op-Ed September 20, 2017

US Violated Spy Laws 'Hundreds' Of Times In Past Decade

By Jack Whittaker
US intelligence agencies have

violated federal surveillance laws hundreds of times over the past decade.

New research by the Open Tech Institute has found over 200 violations by the NSA and the FBI since the introduction of a controversial surveillance provision designed to collect foreign intelligence. Violations include over-collecting data, violating attorney-client privilege, and conducting unlawful surveillance of Americans.

The research is the first comprehensive list of violations of section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA), which is designed to collect data on foreign persons overseas, but also incidentally collects a large amount of data on Americans.

Robyn Greene, policy counsel at the Open Technology Institute notes that though the violations are "inadvertent or unintentional" they represent systemic problems that result from "the scope and complexity of the Section 702 surveillance program."

"It took over five years for the NSA to figure out that it had been searching for Americans' communications in upstream collection, which it wasn't allowed to do," Greene said.

One FISA court judge called the searches a "very serious Fourth Amendment issue," and criticized the NSA for an institutional "lack of candor" for not disclosing the conduct sooner.

Congress has until the end of the year to pass a bill that reauthorizes the section 702 statute. US intelligence chiefs are pushing for a permanent reauthorization of the surveillance powers, while privacy groups are fighting for greater transparency.
-- zeroday.net October 3, 2017

In response to far right, LGBTQ gun group hits firing line

ROCHESTER, N.Y. (AP) --
Former pacifist Lore
McSpadden never touched a gun
before the Trigger Warning Queer &

Trans Gun Club started this past year. Now McSpadden is among the shooters routinely blasting at clay pigeons near Rochester.

Trigger Warning members are anxious about armed and organized extremists. They started a club to teach members how to take up arms.

"I want white supremacists and neo-Nazis to know that queer people are taking steps necessary to protect themselves," said Jake Allen, 27, who helped form the group.

The group is not alone.

Membership in the Pittsburgh chapter of the Pink Pistols, an LGBTQ-oriented gun group with chapters nationwide, bumped up after the presidential election and then after a white supremacist killed a counter-protester in Charlottesville this summer.

The National African-American Gun Association gained 500 new members within two days after Charlottesville. The Liberal Gun Club has seen its paid membership roughly double since the election to about 5,500, said Lara Smith of the group's California chapter.

Mark Bray, author of "Antifa: The Anti-Fascist Handbook" and a visiting scholar at Dartmouth College, said Trump's victory is felt not just by the LGBTQ community, but people of color, immigrants, Jews and Muslims.

Some groups are provocative.

In August, members of the anti-racist group Redneck Revolt stood outside a raucous Trump rally with long guns.

The act of taking up arms for defense is enough to worry some activists.

"Is an arms race what we really want?" asked Scott Fearing, executive director of Rochester's Out Alliance. "[An arms race is] never good for anybody, and death and destruction and harm and hurt can come when so many people have arms and weapons."

Trigger Warning members stress they are about empowerment and self-defense, not offense. Members say it also gives them a sense of community.

-- AP October 23, 2017

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